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AUTHOR Mitau, Theodore G.
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ABSTRACT

In answer to the problem of coordinating college and university curricula with a changing society and to meet demands of students, elected officials, and community members, Minnesota Metropolitan State College has been created with features suited to serve as a pilot project for the development of the new careers concept. The 4 broad areas involved in this program are health care, human services, business systems, and environmental control. Major features of the college are: it will be an institution that focuses on the needs of the city; there will be no formal campus; degrees will be competence-based; it will be in continual operation; and it primarily will be an upper-level college, admitting adults with 2 years of college or the equivalent in occupational training. When proposed to the Minnesota State College System, this plan met with overwhelming enthusiasm. While this program will undoubtedly meet with criticism from outside, it represents an attitude that welcomes change from traditional institutional patterns; that promises a commitment to explore new approaches; and that seeks to meet the needs that have not been generally met by existing college curricula. (HS)

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New Career Curricula for the 1970s:

A Challenge to America's State Colleges and Universities

Remarks by Chancellor G. Theodore Mitau

of the Minnesota State College System

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NEW CAREER CURRICULA FOR THE 1970's: A CHALLENGE TO AMERICA'S STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

For some time now, America's colleges and universities have been vigorously and often quite properly charged with a multitude of failures. The attacks have come from the left, the right, and from the moderate middle.

Our students have charged us frequently with failing to teach them how to handle ideas and how to deal with rapid environmental changes; with failing to be innovative in matters of curriculum; with separating students from life rather than involving them in it; with being degree oriented rather than being interdisciplinary in approach; for letting programs that stress memory of facts rather than their applications in problem solving situations; and for a host of other failings, including that of general irrelevancy.

Other charges indict us with encouraging passivity and compliance rather than freedom and participation; and with being stubbornly insensitive or even hostile to demands for an end to racism, militarism, violence, and poverty.

Our legislators and other elected officials, viewing us from a different perspective, have often been no less critical. They charge us with over-aggressive and expensive building programs; with costly salary ranges; with excessively small class loads; with being overly permissive; with producing too many students in areas where demand for graduates is low; and with an ivory tower provincialism that stifles productivity.

Our townspeople resent the life-style embraced by so many of our students. Many of them are apprehensive of students exercising their new voting power in college communities; and many are doubtful that we are wise enough to spend their tax dollars efficiently.

The fact that the American Association of State Colleges and Universities has planned this Conference, and you, the representatives of the 279 member institutions, are attending such a Conference is in itself persuasive evidence of our deep concern and desire to turn a serious crisis into what may be the greatest educational opportunity and challenge of the last quarter of this century.

We, the members of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, represent institutions which enroll one-fifth of our nation's college students. We prepare more than one-half of the nation's public school teachers.

The suggestions I make today may not be appropriate to all state colleges and universities. They have been developed to respond to the needs of our students, our state and our seven colleges ranging in individual campus enrollment from nearly 14,000 to 3,000.

Five of the seven colleges were designed primarily as teacher training institutions. Over one-half of the elementary and secondary school teachers in Minnesota graduated from one of our colleges, and presently we like so many of you face a rapidly declining market for our graduates.

Clark Kerr, one of this country's most distinguished educators once termed our state colleges and regional universities, "America's most restless institutions of higher learning." I think we should be very proud of this designation. It fundamentally reflects a responsiveness to public needs and a capacity for ready adaptability. Our state colleges and universities – as academies, normal schools, teacher's colleges, and multipurpose institutions – have had a long and proud history of public service as they responded effectively to the changing needs for competently educated manpower. As our colleges have become increasingly aware of the shrinking job market for new teachers, their curricular and guidance programs began to reflect the need to present to students the problems of placement as efforts intensified to obtain a better balance between teacher demand and supply.

Included in these endeavors to adjust to the realities of the market were such measures as closer screening of applicants for teacher education, greater emphasis on retraining of teachers in subject areas where severe shortages still exist (such as learning disabilities) as well as the redirecting of candidates into counseling and towards the growing opportunities for informal teaching-type of work in urban rehabilitation, community development, and involvement with leisure-time programs where increasing numbers of our men and women could find useful and meaningful employment.

Much more, of course, is being done, and still needs to be done, if our colleges are to address themselves with greater effectiveness to the many fundamental questions concerning the future manpower needs of the nation.

Those of us charged by our legislatures with the responsibility for guiding higher education would wish to reflect on some of the particular contributions that our institutions might now be able to make towards the development of alternative careers to teaching. The interest in public service, the dedication to advance knowledge, and the eagerness to improve the quality of life – motivations so widely shared by the men and women who like to become teachers – are enormously valuable resources for social reconstruction that our states and nation can ill afford to waste. The need to enrich our educational options thus challenges our imagination to come forth with proposals that might generate enthusiasm not only among students already on our campuses but also among those many men and women who failed to continue their education because they found our traditional curricula uninspiring or purposeless.

While some students may have had to quit college for economic reasons, for reasons of health or family consideration, or because they were academically not capable of handling college work, reliable studies of the drop-out problem testify to the failure of many of our institutions to engage sufficient numbers of students in meaningful a ademic experiences. According to a recent national survey for example, of the more than one million young people who enter college every year, fewer than half will complete two years of study, and only about one-third will ever complete a 4-year course of study. Think of the heavy economic and psychic costs this high drop-out rate represents.

In view of these considerations it seems that the time may be ready for us to take some bold moves and structure new programs for the many men and women in our colleges and universities who seek viable alternatives to teacher education. But in doing so what educational model should we follow? What identity should our state colleges and universities acquire?

Most of our colleges are truly mass institutions. Many have grown into large institutions primarily in the last 25 years. Yet in our journey from normal schools and teachers' colleges to a greater liberal arts and multi-purpose emphasis many of

our colleges are still seeking a sharper institutional focus or identity. In this search, some have become junior universities. Others are not so sure that the traditional university is the best model. Many of us like to be referred to as the developing colleges and regional universities. It might be contended that our state colleges and universities are now sufficiently strong and stable to develop their own unique curricular models based on our own history, the aspirations of our students and faculties, and the needs and requirements of our society.

In this connection I would like to repeat to you the invitation I extended to students, faculties, administrators, and Board members of the Minnesota State College System this past August. I challenged them to join in a dialogue and explore the possibility of adopting "New Curricula for New Careers". These curricula would hopefully be attractive and relevant to students who would wish to combine practical internship experiences with the more theory-oriented classroom work and to earn a degree other than the traditional Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science. It is in four broad areas that we might begin to develop such pilot programs:

In Health Care

In Human Services

In Business Systems

In Environmental Control

While the precise academic course work that would support such curricula would have to emerge from joint planning efforts by appropriate faculties, students, and off-campus professionals, education for new careers might include certain characteristics....

....Emphasis would be given to the development of the ability to work with people of different backgrounds, social settings, cultural attachments, political interests, and intellectual viewpoints for the purpose of bridging the chasms of class and caste, of races, and of generations as our society attempts to reintegrate the polarized centers of dissent.

....Students enrolling in these broadly defined areas would be able to combine skills acquired in vocational schools, junior colleges, or on-the-job experiences with further education in both specialized and general education.

....Learning – special and general – would emphasize the development of problem-solving skills rather than a narrow expertise; the focus would be interdisciplinary rather than disciplinary. If we are to train students for the future we must provide them with the capacity for continuous learning so that as job requirements change individuals are able to adapt. The knowledge explosion and the rate at which current information becomes obsolete have rendered impractical an education that teaches specific facts as ends in themselves. Rather, students should have an awareness of the information that exists at a given time, the knowledge of how to retrieve it and to evaluate it, and the ability to use it in the decision-making process. In brief, students need a kind of education that permits them to deal with rapid change rather than one that provides a set body of knowledge.

....A bachelor's degree in the four areas mentioned (or other areas that might be defined) would be obtained in three calendar years and include an internship with credit for on-the-job training in a hospital, government department, industry, or social agency.

....A program-based budget would make more explicit resource allocation, hopefully facilitating more sophisticated cost-benefit considerations while at the same time making possible the kind of fiscal flexibility that might be more supportive of curricular innovation.

Students entering new careers, whether in health care or human services, business systems, or environmental controls, might be the type of men and women who would be eager to enlist their competencies to battle pollution in the air, in water, and on land; who would want to assist in the rehabilitation of victims of drug addiction; who would wish to help rebuild our cities, towns, and neighborhoods; who would work to improve our law enforcement and criminal justice administration; who would wish to strengthen management systems in business or government or who would be able to offer constructive guidance to the disillusioned and disheartened victims of social injustice.

Far from pointing towards the stereotyped view of vocationalism, these new careers would challenge the idealism of our young men and women by demonstrating to them how they can enlist the discipline of skill and the dignity of work not merely for materialism but in behalf of causes and commitments that transcend personal gain or acquisition. Rather than diverting students from their genuine concern for the fulfillment of the American promise these new careers might offer a bridge between aspiration and action, between the ideal and the possible.

Even though this "invitation to dialogue" was extended less than two months ago to the Minnesota Staty College Community, the response has been remarkably supportive – even enthusiastic. Legislative, Congressional, news media, and Department of Health, Education, and Welfare representatives have all extended much needed encouragement.

All seven of our System's college presidents have indicated unanimous support of the thrust of this argument and of the need to move forward aggressively. Their support can be best symbolized by remarks made to the opening meeting of the faculty at Mankato State College by the College's President, James F. Nickerson, who also serves as a Director of the AASCU. In that speech, the President of our System's largest campus, told his colleagues to meet the challenge and "to move and to move quickly to improve our education and services; to relate them to the world of work; to make them readily available to a much wider clientele.

He went on to say: "These are bold steps I ask of you: 1) to explore the cutting edges of collegiate change, 2) to make serious evaluation of the promising ventures, 3) to make immediate plans for a major and searching review of every program, every course and every effort of the institution, and based on these reviews, 4) to withdraw from present programs five percent of the staff positions and staff support to be redirected to new effort and, 5) that we create a representative task force to coordinate our explorations and evaluation of the new.

Within one week of President Nickerson's speech, fifty-five faculty members had submitted letters of interest to participate in activities of the College's Task Force on Change which will guide the new programs.

The Minnesota State College Student Association, the system-wide student government organization, passed a resolution last week to "support and encourage the object of bringing 'new careers' curricula into the state colleges."

This student concern is particularly reinforced by U.S. Labor Department projections reported in the October 5, 1971 issue of the Wall Street Journal:

> In the 1970s there will be a demand for 183 percent more systems analysts, 93 per cent more urban planners, 67 per cent more social workers and only a 3.3 per cent increase in the demand for elementary school teachers.

The President's Manpower Report of 1971 projects a deficit of 400,000 allied health workers by 1980. This does not envisage improvements in the necessary levels of health care which the public is demanding.

In addition to the welcome support of these many groups a locally based foundation has granted us a substantial allocation to assist the colleges in developing new career programs asaalternatives to teacher education.

As in other states, some of our faculties have already moved in the direction of these newer career options. For example, we have existing programs in law enforcement and criminal justice, in computer, drafting, electronics, mechanical, medical, and photographic technologies, and in traffic safety education. One of our colleges is in the process of proposing a Bachelors in Vocational Technology. New programs in social services and social work at other colleges emphasize the development of problem-solving skills, have a multi-disciplinary orientation, and include the opportunity for internship and field experiences. Other programs include a new environmental studies major.

Our most agressive innovation to date was the establishment this summer of an entirely new college – Minnesota Metropolitan State College. The Minnesota Legislature in its desire to keep our state in the forefront of change authorized the new college with the expressed intent that it be a distinctly different kind of institution, unique in Minnesota, and with features peculiarly suited to serve as a pilot for the development of the new careers concept.

Among the characteristics of the college which set it apart from many other institutions of higher education are the following:

....Minnesota Metropolitan is "pro-city". The curriculum, both professional and liberal, will focus on the needs of the city and on giving students an understanding of how to live and function successfully in large urban areas.

....The College will not have a formal campus. Instead, the college is located wherever there are people and an environment conducive to learning. Class will be held in existing factories, museums, parks, churches, schools, and offices.

....Degrees will be competence-based, awarded on the basis of what students can do.

....The College will run throughout the year, every day of the week, around the clock, or whatever time is convenient for its students.

....It is primarily an upper-level college. It will provide the equivalent of the last two years of an undergraduate degree to transfer students from metropolitan area junior colleges and area vocational-technical schools; adults who have dropped

out of college but who have the desire to complete degrees; and adults who have achieved the equivalent of the first two years of college through work or other experience.

....The faculty will include a core of full-time teachers with conventional academic credentials as well as professors without conventional academic credentials but with the knowledge, insights, experience, and the commitment to which students respond.

Inevitably, however, curricular shifts of this kind raise important questions and issues. For example, if our colleges in the months and years to come were to embrace these new career programs we would have to accommodate students with much wider divergencies in age, social backgrounds, and educational experience.

With the demands for austerity by the public and by legislators, we cannot expect significant additional support. We may be forced to discover new ways of improving education within presently provided resources.

Whatever the detail of curricular adaptation and change, we will have to be prepared to admit a variety of other concomitant developments in the years ahead.

....Requirements as to college admissions, course distribution, credits, and academic calendars will become more flexible.

....Our institutions have an enormous contribution to make in beginning to recognize experience of a non-academic nature in granting degrees and academic credit. We must honor off-campus learning experiences. This is very complicated. We have few standards or guidelines for evaluating or assessing experience.

....Greater responsibility for learning and organizing knowledge would shift from the formal professor-dominated classroom situation to the individual student.

....Students will increasingly seek out internship opportunities to combine the more practical and problem-oriented off-campus learning situation with the more abstract, theoretical offering of the classroom.

....Instructional personnel will include a growing number of adjunct professors – men and women who, while not possessing the customary academic credential of professoriate, can offer a totality of expertise, competence and experience that can greatly enhance educational quality. These people must also be brought into the curriculum planning process.

While such a list can make no claim to being exhaustive, even these few projections point to a future concept of the respective roles of faculty and students, of campus and curriculum, which is quite different from that now widely accepted throughout our systems. It will require the exercise of great skill, good judgment,

careful planning, and much wisdom by all components of our system if severe tremors are to be avoided and necessary adjustments realized. Thus the new curricular changes must respond to the new needs of both students and society within a framework of respect for legitimate professional concerns of faculties and administrators.

At this point it might be appropriate to add a caveat lest our missionary zeal delude us into thinking our approach will meet all aspects of today's higher education crisis. If curricular innovations are taken in isolation, we will do little to solve the educational challenges. Whatever the precise nature of programmatic changes they must become part and parcel of the broader spectrum of structural and curricular reform which would have to encompass much of the following:

....the establishing of rules and regulations which will identify clear-cut authority and responsibility so that every component of the collegiate community will be heard and given a voice in decision-making.

....the sharing of increasingly scarce resources after appropriate curriculum review of both graduate and undergraduate programs in order to eliminate or consolidate programs which are too costly to duplicate at each institution within a system.

....the demanding of a more effective and fair evaluation of faculties and administrators.

....the implementing of better communication within a system or institution between administrators, faculty, students, and civil service personnel.

....the recognition that our primary goal is to serve the student and society and not to assure faculties or administrators an unqualified continuance of the status quo.

....the movement toward management information systems, assessment measures and program type budgets that will assist our colleges and universities with the kinds and quantity of data without which sound decision-making is no longer possible.

Curricular experimentation or innovation is never easy. There will be many critics. There will be many misunderstandings. There will be those who will charge us with cheap vocationalism. There will be those who will charge us with destroying the liberal arts - the search for the good, the true, and the beautiful. There will be those who will charge that education cannot be confused with

experience. There will always be learners and teachers who view education as an end in itself and who do not want a job centered education. There will always be students who treasure the liberal arts. And there will always be problems in assessing experience and translating it into formal academic credits or norms.

But this proposal does not seek to displace the Bachelor of Arts degree and liberal arts programs. This proposal does not seek to depreciate the Bachelor of Science degree with its attempt to combine a general and professional education. This proposal does not seek to discontinue curricula for the many pre-professional programs in law, public administration, engineering, medicine. This proposal also does not attack the concept that our types of institutions should be engaged in graduate work especially leading towards Master of Science, Masters of Arts and the Doctor of Arts degrees. This proposal does not mean we should stop preparing teachers or fail to upgrade our teacher education programs.

What is important throughout this dialogue is that we continue to welcome new ideas, new approaches, new methods of teaching, the building of bridges between campus and community, and greater participation in curriculum building by students and non-professional teachers – by the men and women who have, through their careers in business, industry, commerce, government, and social agencies and labor organizations given proof of their creative and organizational talent.

What is important is an attitude that welcomes change; a commitment to explore new approaches. We are looking for enrichment to meet the needs which have not generally been met by our existing college curricula.

In a very real sense the next decade offers a remarkable opportunity for developing state colleges and universities to assume a leadership role in higher education that properly belongs to them.

If they are willing to make some of these critical changes, these institutions could truly become a leading force in American higher education throughout the 70s and 80s.

There is good reason to believe that our institutions can indeed respond to this challenge for reasons peculiarly indigenous to their organization, orientation and missions.

The American state colleges and universities....

....possess a flexibility of curriculum and staffing patterns that is often lacking in institutions with a primary graduate and research orientation.

....have always been close to the people and to their needs for public service.

....can serve well as resource centers of communities and regions.

....enroll a majority of students which are frankly and firmly committed to a career-centered education.

....are presently actively engaged in critical self-examination and clarification of their role and function.

There is nothing wrong for America's state colleges and universities to be viewed as the Avis of higher education in the 70s. They try harder.

While it would be most inappropriate to expect our colleges and universities to solve this nation's underlying and very fundamental employment problems, it would be irresponsible for our colleges and universities not to provide the problem-solvers of the future. We will always need more men and women who can think well and act wisely, who can dream and work, who can articulate ideas and show compassion, who can give of themselves in order to enrich their neighborhood, their country, and the world.

Such men and women have learned that by enriching others, they enrich themselves. By making life more meaningful for their fellows, their own lives become more precious and more meaningful. Only in this way can man add new dimensions of brilliance to every day's hour, and to every moment of his existence.